
D. A. DORSEY HOUSE

250 N.W. 9 STREET

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI PLANNING DEPARTMENT
TO THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF
D. A. DORSEY HOUSE
250 N.W. 9th STREET
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton 1/14/83
Historic Preservation Date
Consultant

Accepted by Charles E. Chase 1/25/83
Chairman, Heritage Date
Conservation Board

Designated by Miami City Commission
Ordinance No. 9627
Date 5/31/83

<u>CONTENTS</u>	Page
I. General Information	4
II. Significance	7
III. Historical Information	8
IV. Architectural Information	9
V. Planning Context	12
VI. HC Zoning Elements	13
VII. Bibliography	14

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

D. A. Dorsey House

Current Name:

D. A. Dorsey House

Location:

250 N.W. 9th Street
Miami, Florida 33142

Present Owner:

Dor-Cha, Inc.
1790 N.W. 59th Street
Miami, Florida 33142

Present Occupant:

Vacant

Present Use:

Vacant

Present Zoning District:

R-4

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-1

Tax Folio Number:

01-0103-50-1070

Boundary Description of HC Zoning District:

Lot 7 of Block 35 of the plat of MIAMI NORTH, as recorded in Plat Book 13 at Page 41, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

HC Zoning Classification:

Historic Site

Dade County Historic Survey Rating:

Architectural Significance	- 2
Historical Significance	- 1
Contextural Significance	- 2

D. A. DORSEY HOUSE

250 N. W. 9 STREET



II. SIGNIFICANCE

Statement of Significance:

The D. A. Dorsey House is significant for its association with Miami's first black millionaire. Dana A. Dorsey, a pioneer citizen and developer of early "Colored Town," is generally recognized as Miami's most famous black resident.

Dorsey came to Miami in 1897 and soon began to purchase lots in Colored Town. The value of these \$25 lots quickly skyrocketed as Miami expanded to the north, and Dorsey's fortune grew. Dorsey eventually amassed the largest real estate empire ever owned by a black man in the history of Dade County.

Dorsey suggested and helped organize South Florida's first black bank, The Mutual Industrial Benefit and Saving Association. He also served as chairman of the Colored Advisory Committee to the Dade County School Board and as registrar for black men in Dade County during World War I. In addition, Dorsey was a noted philanthropist and was well-respected as a civic leader in Colored Town.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The D. A. Dorsey House is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

1. Is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past.

The D. A. Dorsey House is the most important remaining structure associated with the life of Miami's first black millionaire and one of its most prominent businessmen.

III. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection:

1913

Architect:

The D. A. Dorsey House is said to have been designed by D. A. Dorsey

Builder/Contractor:

The D.A. Dorsey House is said to have been built by D. A. Dorsey.

Historical Context:

Dana A. Dorsey was born in Quitman, Georgia in 1872. A sharecropper's son, Dorsey probably attended a freedman's school through the sixth grade.

After moving to Miami in 1897, Dorsey engaged in truck farming, but soon began to invest in real estate. He purchased lots for \$25 each in the vicinity of the old Seaboard Station at N.W. 7th Avenue and N.W. 19th Street and soon accumulated large blocks of real estate. Listed as the only black real estate agent in Miami in 1914, Dorsey went on to acquire Elliot Key and Fisher Island, where he provided a public beach for blacks.

Dorsey built the house at 250 N.W. 9th Street in 1913 for his second wife Rebecca Livingston.

The Dorseys lived in the house until 1940. D.A. Dorsey died on February 29, 1940, and his wife died three months later. Dorsey's daughter, Dana Albert Susie Chapman, inherited the house and Dorsey's estate.

IV. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Description of Building:

The D.A. Dorsey House is a two story rectangular structure with three bays across the north (front) façade. This wood frame building is covered with shiplap siding and is topped with a hipped roof covered with composition roll roofing.

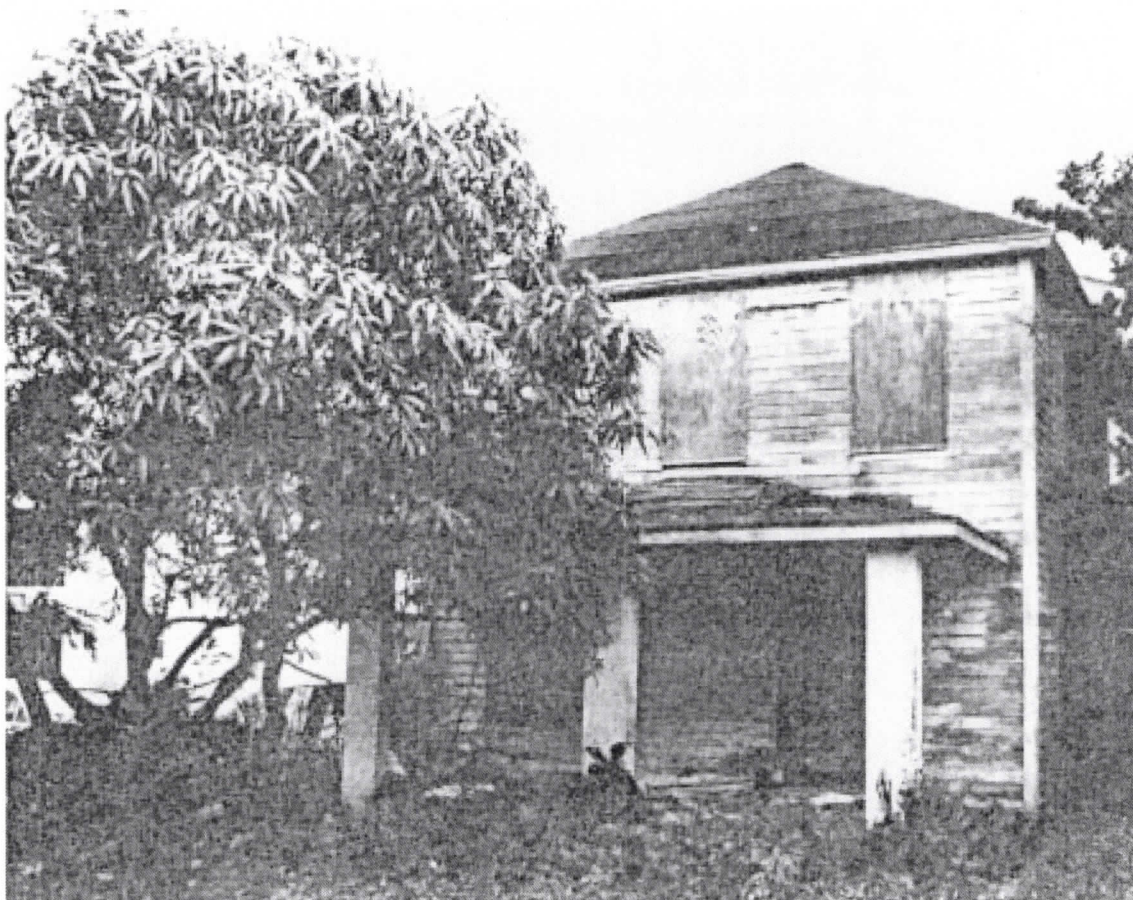
The north façade features a front porch which is supported by three masonry posts and is topped with a hipped roof. This porch, added during the 1940's, replaces the building's original porch which featured finely turned wooden balusters and columns.

Windows and doors throughout the building feature plain wood surrounds. All openings are presently boarded up.

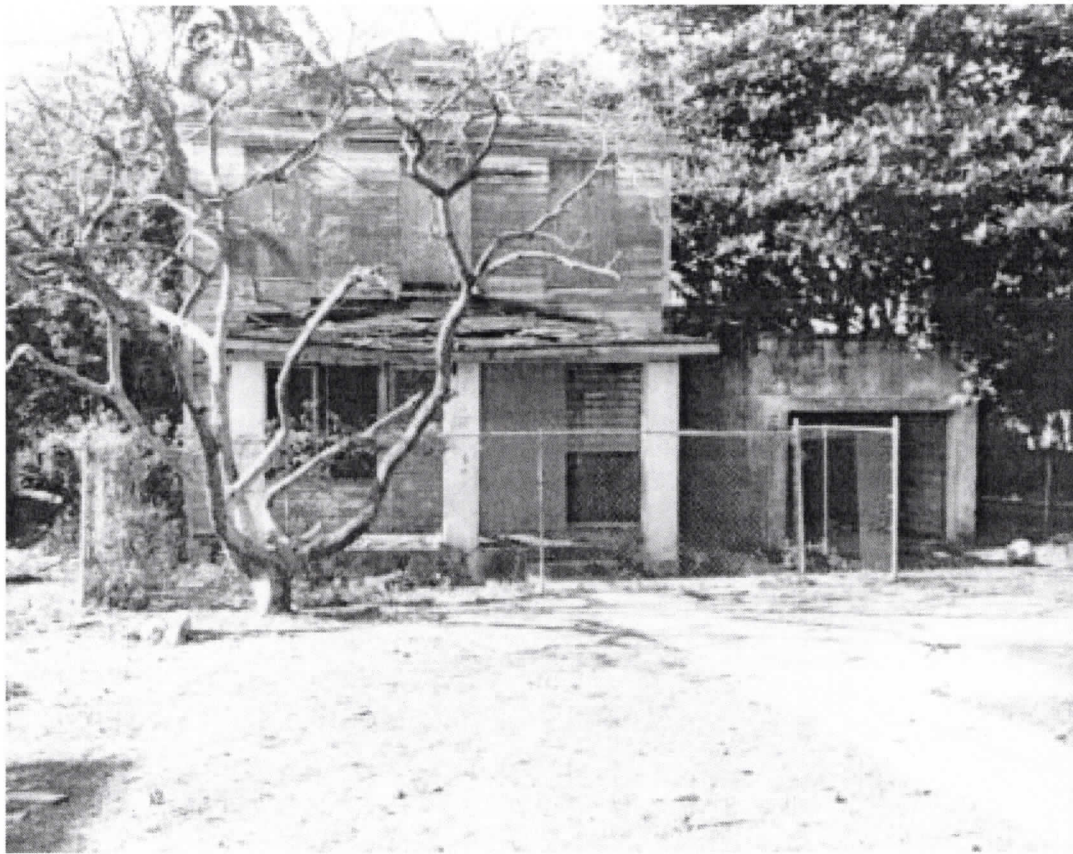
The D.A. Dorsey House originally fronted directly on the sidewalk but was moved approximately 50 feet back on the same lot around 1950.

Description of Site:

The D.A. Dorsey House faces north and is located in the center of the block. A one story concrete block garage is located directly west of the house. When the D.A. Dorsey House was originally constructed, two one-story frame residences were located behind the main house.



D. A. Dorsey House
250 NW. 9th Street
North (front) façade
1982



D.A. Dorsey House
250 N.W. 9 Street

V. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

The D.A. Dorsey House has been vacant for numerous years and has undergone severe deterioration. It is further threatened by vandalism and arson in its present location and condition.

The Metro-Dade Office of Community and Economic Development has awarded a grant to the Black Archives, History, and Research Foundation, Inc. to study the feasibility of restoration and adaptive reuse of the house. Preliminary structural investigations have shown that much of the building material is beyond repair and would require replacement.

The house is located within the Southeast Overtown Redevelopment Area, which is slated for redevelopment with public assistance through tax increment financing. The block in which the Dorsey House is located is proposed for new housing development. The owners wish to have the Dorsey House moved, so that the land will be available for redevelopment.

Conservation Objectives:

The Southeast Overtown Redevelopment Plan calls for the D.A. Dorsey House to be moved from its present location to a public plaza area located along a principal pedestrian access corridor to the Overtown Metrorail Station. This new location would be acceptable because it is within the small neighborhood of its original location, and because the structure would receive maximum security, public exposure, and use within the activity area generated by the Metrorail Station.

As an alternative, the D.A. Dorsey House could be retained on its original site, provided that appropriate use and security could be arranged.

These conservation objectives can best be achieved by maintaining the present zoning of the property, requiring only the review of physical changes to the property.

VI. HC ZONING ELEMENTS

Boundaries:

The boundaries of the HC zoning district have been drawn to include the entire tract of land owned by Dor-Cha, Inc.

Major Exterior Surfaces Subject to Review:

All four facades of the D.A. Dorsey House shall be considered major exterior surfaces subject to review.

Major Landscape Features Subject to Review:

The major landscape features subject to review shall include all features which are subject to requirements for tree removal permits, as set forth in Chapter 17 of the City Code.

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Black Archives, History and Records Foundation of South Florida, Inc., Miami, Florida. Black Photographic Archives and Oral History Collection of Pioneers in Dade County, Florida, Between 1896 and 1946, Portfolio #1, Archives #26.

"Black Miami: The Way It Was," The Miami Times, Miami, Florida. November 4, 1982.

Dade County, Florida. Community and Economic Development, Historic Preservation Division. Dade County Historic Survey, Site Inventory File for 250 N.W. 9th Street, Miami, Florida.